



JAPAN by Toshiyuki Omomo

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Overview

After the Meiji Restoration of the late 1860s, Japan began to organize a national education system. By the Restoration, the Tokugawa Shogunate regime (the regime of the *samurai* warriors) had collapsed, and the new Meiji government had been established. The government set up a highly centralized system in order to spread education rapidly throughout the country. Education was regarded as a necessary means to modernize Japan and allow the country to compete with its western counterparts. In the early 20th century, elementary school enrollments in Japan had reached 90% (KSEA, 16; Kaigo, 65-66).

Education before World War II was a function of the national government, and local governments were expected to carry out national policies faithfully under the eye of the Minister of Home Affairs as well as the Minister of Education. Without the presence of any local educational authorities like boards of education in America, the education system prior to World War II was not only highly centralized but also dependent upon the general public administration. Although the Meiji Constitution, enacted in 1889, established the Imperial Parliament, under this Constitution the Emperor had governing power and could issue imperial ordinances independently. Though there were some exceptions especially of financial matters, fundamental

aspects of education policy were determined by the Emperor in the form of imperial ordinances. “Although the reason given for this was that it was to prevent educational issues from getting mixed up in political struggles in parliament, in fact it was to rationalize control by certain statesmen and government officials, and latter (sic) the military” (KSEA, 18-19).

After World War II, the Japanese educational system was drastically reformed. The Meiji Constitution was replaced by the Constitution of Japan, which was promulgated in 1946 and enforced in 1947. Under this new Constitution, the sovereign power resided with the people. The Diet, which consisted of the representatives of the people, was prescribed as “the highest organ of the state power” and “the sole law-making organ of the State” (Article 41). Instead of imperial ordinance, the important affairs of education were to be determined by laws enacted by the Diet (KSEA, 33-34). In 1947, the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law were enacted.

The Constitution of Japan guaranteed “the right to receive an equal education” as one of the fundamental rights of the people (Article 26), and the Fundamental Law of Education prescribed the aims and the fundamental principles of education. Under the School Education Law, a so-called single track school system was adopted to guarantee equal educational opportunities. Instead of a complicated, multi-tracked system, the school system was to comprise six-years of elementary schooling, three-years of lower secondary schooling, three-years of upper secondary schooling and four-years of university education.

By the post-war reforms, the system of educational administration in Japan was decentralized and fairly independent of the general administration. In Japan, two levels of local government exist: the prefecture and the municipality. Under the Board of Education Law of 1948, an American-style board of education system was introduced, and boards of education were formed in every prefecture and municipality. The fundamental principles of the board of education system were layman (or popular) control of education and professional leadership. The citizens of each prefecture or municipality were to elect board members, and board members were charged with appointing a school superintendent. The Educational Personnel Certification Law of 1949 required the certification of superintendents as well as of teachers, principals and supervisors. Though the governor (in the case of prefectures) or the mayor (in the case of municipalities) was granted powers with regard to financial matters, boards of education still had some powers for planning and appropriating budgets.

These post-war education reforms were not intact for long, however. In 1954, the Educational Personnel Certification Law was revised, and mandatory certification for superintendents was abolished. As a result, school boards had a wider pool from which to draw superintendents, but superintendents lost the legal basis for their expertise. Also, the certifications of principals and supervisors were abolished. Two years later, in spite of strong opposition, the Board of Education Law was abolished. In its place, the Law Concerning the Organization and Functions of Local Educational

Administration was enacted. The major changes accompanying this law were four-fold:

- Board members were to be appointed by the governor or the mayor of each locality;
- The appointment of a superintendent by the prefectural board was to be approved by the Minister of Education, and the appointment of a superintendent by the municipal board was to be approved by the prefectural board;
- The Minister of Education was given the power to require necessary measures for the improvements of illegal or inadequate administrative behavior by boards of education or heads of local governments (governors or mayors), and prefectural boards of education were given the same power to municipal boards of education or the heads of municipalities;
- Finally, boards of education lost financial powers.

The intentions of this new law were explained as “securing political neutrality in education and the stability of educational administration; the promotion of harmony between the general administration and the educational administration; and strengthening the partnership among governments at the national, prefectural, and municipal level” (KSEA, 28). However, these revisions were strongly criticized for weakening the principles of local autonomy in education.

Adding to the reformulation of education policy as a nationalized endeavor, in 1958 the national standard for curriculum (the Course of Study) was revised. The Course of Study was first formed as a guide for teachers in post-war reforms, but since this revision schools and teachers were required to follow its provisions precisely. Thus, by the end of the 1950s Japan had returned to a highly centralized, hierarchical form of education policy.

Around the beginning of the twenty-first-century, the pendulum of education policy in Japan is once again swinging in the opposite direction. The major tendencies in education reform are decentralization and deregulation. At the core of these demands for greater autonomy, at both the prefectural and municipal levels, exists a recognition that the centralized system no longer responds to the diverse educational needs of the Japanese people. There is also a push in education reform to reduce the influence of government at all levels. The slogans of today’s reforms are not only “from central to local” but also “from public to private.” On one hand, the private sector in Japan is increasingly expected to have a larger role in providing public goods. On the other hand, many feel that consumers (in the case of education, parents) deserve greater decision-making power. However, as discussed later, these reforms need the different type of regulations, and the structural change of administrative regulations is going on.

The structure of schooling

Despite the great changes that have taken place in Japanese educational policy since the post-war era, the basic 6-3-3-4 structure of schooling has generally remained the same. However, other important structural modifications have been made in the past 50 years.

Only the national government, local governments (prefectures and municipalities), and the school corporations that exist under Private School Law may establish schools prescribed in Article 1 of the School Education Law. The Article 1 schools were initially elementary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools as well as universities, schools for the blind, schools for the deaf, schools for the handicapped, and kindergartens. In 1962, colleges of technology were added to this list to provide those who complete lower secondary education with five-year consistent education in specific fields. Also, in 1999, secondary school was added to the list to provide students with six-year consistent secondary education. These reforms have led to the gradual modification of the single track system in Japan. It is also important to note that in 2007 schools for blind, deaf, and handicapped students were integrated and are now referred to as “special support schools.” These schools, which provide for education at the kindergarten, elementary, and lower and upper secondary levels, allow for students with specific needs to be served in a specialized environment.

Kindergartens, which are not compulsory in Japan, accept children aged three-to- five-years-old. They provide children, depending upon when they begin school, with up to three-year courses. The six-year primary education track and three-year lower secondary education track are compulsory. Compulsory education in Japan is from age six to age fifteen. The enrollment rate for compulsory education is currently 99.9% (Ministry of Education 2002, 28; Ministry of Education 2005, ii).

Though upper secondary education is not compulsory, the enrollment rate for students at this level is about 98% (Ministry of Education 2005, 9). Most upper secondary schools in Japan require that students attend full-day courses, but some offer part-time or correspondence courses. Students typically complete full-day courses of study at this level in three years, whereas part-time and correspondence courses usually take three years or more. Upper secondary schools provide general, specialized, and integrated courses. General courses provide for general education, and specialized courses are for vocational or other specialized forms education (e.g. more intensive studies of science-mathematics, English language, or physical education). Integrated courses offer a wide variety of subjects coming from both general and specialized courses (Ministry of Education 2005, ii).

The courses-of-study at most Japanese universities last four years, but courses for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, and pharmacy take six years. Junior colleges provide two or three year courses for students; one of the distinguishing features of junior colleges is that most students are women. Colleges of technology provide another option for students with regard to higher education. Aside from those institutions prescribed in Article 1 of the School Education Law, for example, specialized training colleges provide various general, vocational and technical courses of study. At present, enrollment rates at

universities and junior colleges is about 50%, and that of all higher education institutions is about 75% (Ministry of Education 2005, iii, 10).

Schools established by the national government, by the local governments (prefectures and municipalities), and by school corporations are called, respectively, national, public, and private schools. At the compulsory education level, most students go to public schools (about 98% at elementary school and about 93% at lower secondary school). At the pre-school and the higher education levels many students go to private schools (about 79% at kindergarten, 92% at junior college, and 73% at university). At upper secondary schools the distribution is different, with about 70% of students at this level enrolled at public schools and about 30% at private schools. In terms of percentage distributions of student enrollments, the role of national schools is very limited from pre-school to the upper secondary level—national schools enroll less than 1% of pupils. In contrast, the rate of student enrollment for national universities is about 22%. (Ministry of Education 2005, 4).

The legal framework

The Constitution of Japan is “the supreme law of the nation,” and “no law, ordinanceor other act of government, or part thereof, contrary to the provisions hereof, shall have legal force or validity” (Article 98). Article 26 of the Constitution states:

All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided for by law.

All people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free.

The Constitution also provides that “Academic freedom is guaranteed” (Article 23). These are the basic principles of Japanese education.

The Fundamental Law of Education prescribes the basic aims and general principles of education. The School Education Law prescribes the general requirements of school education, the purposes and courses of schools from kindergarten to university, qualifications for admission to each school, and the arrangement and roles of school personnel. More specific laws have been enacted for each component of education. Such laws outline requirements for school textbooks, school organization (e.g. the number of classes, the number of students in a class, and the allotments of school personnel), school personnel certificates, school lunches, school libraries, and school administration and finance. In addition, the Private School Law prescribes the roles of the state and of local public bodies in promoting private schools. It also prescribes procedures for establishing and managing school corporations (to be discussed in further detail below). Further, many laws not specifically designed to address education affect school administration, finance and personnel. Among these are the National Government Organization Law, the Local Autonomy Law, the

Finance Law, the Local Finance Law, the National Public Service Personnel Law, and the Local Public Service Personnel Law.

As mentioned previously, the Japanese Constitution prescribes that the Diet is “the sole law-making organ of the State.” However, this does not mean that educational policies and the administration of education in Japan have been solely based upon statutes enacted by the Diet. To enforce statutes, many regulations have been set by national administrative agencies. The Enforcement Order of the School Education Law (cabinet ordinance), the Enforcement Regulation of the School Education Law (ministerial ordinance), and the standards for establishing schools at each level from kindergarten to university (ministerial ordinance) are examples of regulations (Omomo 2010, 41-42).

Local autonomy is one of the fundamental principles guaranteed by the Japanese Constitution, and each prefectural and municipal government has its own assembly as well as its own governor and mayor. As mentioned before, a board of education exists at each prefecture and municipality. Municipal boards of education generally operate elementary schools and lower secondary schools, and prefectural boards of education generally operate upper secondary schools and special support schools. Assemblies have the power to enact bylaws, some of which are related to education. Also, boards of education have the power to enact regulations. Though these bylaws and regulations may not contradict national laws and ordinances, they work to preserve local autonomy (Omomo 2010, 42).

Freedom to establish non-state schools

The freedom to establish non-state, or private, schools exists in Japan. However, in order to guarantee the stability and public nature of the overall system, only approved bodies, referred to as school corporations, are allowed to establish private schools.

Any person or persons wishing to open and maintain a private school must first create a school corporation. It is the corporation that will ultimately be responsible for the activities of the approved school. Requirements for establishing a school corporation are outlined in the Private School Law. Any new school corporations are subject to the approval of the governor of the prefecture in which the new private school is to be established (private universities and their corporations are subject to the approval of the Minister of Education). Once the corporation has been approved by the governor, that corporation must then ask the governor to approve the private school that it seeks to open. Any corporation seeking to open a school must prove that it has all necessary funding, equipment, and facilities to properly operate the school or schools that it seeks to establish (Article 4, 25, 30).

A school corporation must have five or more directors and two or more auditors as its officers (Article 35). The role of auditors is to inspect the business management and the state of property of the corporation. Auditors report to the corporation’s board of directors and board of councilors. The board of directors oversees the

businesses of the corporation, and they are presided over by a chief director. The chief director hears the opinions of the board of councilors with regard to matters such as budgets and endowments (Article 35, 36, 37, 42).

In Japan, private schools are regarded as important components of public education. Therefore, like national and public schools, private schools must comply with laws and regulations regarding curriculum, school organization, the qualifications of teachers, and maintenance of facilities, among other things. Because they must comply with such laws and regulations, public financial support to private schools is interpreted as constitutional.

Homeschooling

In Japan, home schooling is not formally permitted. The School Education Law obliges parents to send their children aged six to fifteen to primary and lower secondary education schools. Parents who violate this provision can be punished with a fine (Article 16, 17, 144). Under the School Education Law, “schools” are defined as those prescribed in Article 1. “Home schools” are not included in that definition.

However, there is a documented number of children who are absent from schools for long periods of time. In the case of lower secondary school, in 2003, the number of students who do not attend school for 30 or more days out of a year because of “school-phobia” (which used to be called “school-hatred”) was 102,126 (about 2.7% of the total number of the students). At the elementary level that number was 24,086 (about 0.3% of the total number of the students) (Ministry of Education 2005, 19, 65-66, 75). Under current education reform trends that emphasize “diversity” and “individuality,” public sentiment toward these children has become tolerant. A reflection of this is that some municipalities have adopted measures to support students who prefer to study at home. For example, in 2002 Shiki City in Saitama prefecture began an initiative that periodically sends teachers to family homes with the purpose of assisting children in their studies. Also, some researchers in Japan argue that home schooling should be formally constituted as an alternative and acceptable schooling option. Advocates of home schooling claim that it is important not only for the education of the children who are not fit for the daily activities of ordinary schools, but also for the parental right to education.

In spite of these arguments, however, home schooling has not yet become an important item on Japan’s reform agenda. Criticism and worry still exist around the issue of leaving the education of children solely to parents. Indeed, even within arguments for parental rights, emphasis is placed on “participation” and “choice”; that is, education reformers are less concerned with the issue of home schooling than they are with ensuring that parents are participants in school decisions and have the freedom to choose schools for their children.

School choice not limited by family income

At the level of compulsory education, municipal boards designate the school that each child in a municipality must attend. They do this by delineating school attendance zones and require parents to send their children to the school located in the zone where they live. Of course, parents may send their children to national or private schools. However, in Japan, national schools at this education level are very few, and private schools exist mainly in large cities. Because of this, parental choice is extremely limited in Japan (Omomo 2010, 43).

Despite an overwhelming tendency toward zoned schooling, under recent deregulatory reforms some municipalities have begun to adopt public school choice systems. For example, in 2000 Shinagawa-ku in Tokyo divided its district into four areas, each with eight to twelve elementary schools, and allowed parents to choose any school within the area where they live. In 2001 Shinagawa-ku adopted an even more flexible policy for lower secondary education, which allowed parents to choose to send their child to any school in the district. Despite this progress in Shinagawa-ku and, since 2001, additional municipalities, school choice reforms have not spread rapidly in Japan.

As in other countries, school choice advocates in Japan argue from different perspectives. Some insist that parents have primary responsibility for the education of their children and should therefore have the right to choose the schools that their children attend. Others argue for school choice from a market-oriented perspective. This point of view holds that school choice creates competition among schools, which makes schools more distinctive and therefore responsive to individual preferences.

However, because Japan has such a centralized system of education, many argue that it is difficult for schools to have truly distinctive missions or offer tailored courses of study. Critics fear that this lack of diversity would lead parents to choose schools by reputation alone. Critics also contend that allowing parents to choose schools could prevent students of different abilities and backgrounds from studying together and even promote competition among children at too young an age (Omomo 2001a, 2001b; Fujita).

At the non-compulsory upper-secondary education level, parents and students may choose public schools. However, students must take competitive entrance examinations to be admitted to upper secondary schools, and the competition is especially rigorous for schools that have reputations for preparing students to enter the reputable universities. At this level, students may opt to attend private schools; compared to compulsory education, the number of private schools available to students at this level is quite large. However, as is the case with public schools, private schools at the upper-secondary level are ranked. With regard to national schools, the number of upper-secondary options is quite small. Like public and private schools, entrance examinations for national schools are very competitive. In Japan about 98% of students attend upper secondary schools. It should be noted, however, that many students do not necessarily attend the school they really want.

Tuitions are not charged at national and public compulsory education schools. There are,

however, costs associated with private schools, and parents choosing to send their children to such institutions bear a double burden. They must pay tuition and fees for private schools while also paying taxes to maintain public and national schools. At the upper-secondary level, by the recent policy, tuition became free at public schools. This policy also provides some supporting fund for tuition payment at private and national schools at this level.

In Japan, families that send their children to private schools are not necessarily wealthy. Government subsidized vouchers might be helpful for them. Such programs, however, have not gained major support. Instead, major political arguments have focused on the public support of financial provisions to private schools, which may allow schools to decrease the financial burden of families.

School distinctiveness protected by law and policy

The national government sets national curriculum standards of each academic subject, and, according to these standards, school textbooks are compiled. Private companies compile most textbooks, but all textbooks are subject to examination and approval by the Ministry of Education. Some textbooks, in subjects for which there is lesser student demand, are compiled by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry requires that the national standards it sets and the textbooks it approves or compiles are used in every Japanese classroom.

In addition to regulating what is taught in schools, national standards exist for school organization and facilities. General standards for organization, facilities and equipment, and other conditions exist at each school level from kindergarten to graduate school. For public elementary and secondary schools, there are further regulations that address class size and personnel.

Teaching certification is required of all teachers from kindergarten to the upper secondary level in national schools, public schools, and private schools. Teacher preparation programs for regular teacher certificates are provided at higher education institutions. The requirements of each certificate are prescribed by the national law, and prefectural boards of education give the certificates to persons who have completed the required courses.

School distinctiveness is somewhat limited in this context, and the distinctiveness of Japanese schools is therefore not generally well protected by law and policy. Recent reforms for decentralization and the relaxation of regulations, however, attempt to create more suitable regulatory conditions under which school distinctiveness might begin to flourish.

Distinctive character

In a series of recent reforms, the Ministry of Education presented a more flexible interpretation of how schools can use national curriculum standards. Also, school establishment standards and public school class-size regulations have been revised

as more flexible requirements. Because of this, municipalities and schools now have increased decision-making power with regard to curricular and institutional organization.

Additionally, a new policy entitled the Special Districts for Structural Reform was started. In the Special Districts, schools may pursue distinctive programs that deviate from national requirements if those programs are first approved by the national government. One example of this is that some schools began English education at the elementary school level in spite of a general regulation that required English education to be started at the lower secondary education schools. Now, English education is generally introduced to elementary schools.

Of course, private schools in Japan are permitted to have distinctive characters. Although private schools must comply with many legal and administrative regulations, in comparison to national and public schools, private schools are granted greater autonomy to direct the educations of pupils enrolled. In this vein, perhaps the most important distinguishing feature of private schools is that they may be religious in character. While public schools are charged to adhere to the constitutional requirement of strict separation between religion and state-sponsored activities, private schools may provide a religious education to students under the people's right of religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution.

Decisions about admitting pupils

According to the Fundamental Law of Education:

The people shall all be given equal opportunities to receive education according to their ability, and they shall not be subject to educational discrimination on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin.

This fundamental principle applies to the admissions processes for all schools— national, public, and private. While interpretations of the phrases “equal opportunities” and “according to their ability” are controversial, competitive examinations are still broadly used to select and admit pupils to schools.

To ensure some degree of educational opportunity regardless of socio-economic background, the same law prescribes that “[T]he state and local public bodies shall take measures to give financial assistance to those who have, in spite of their ability, difficulty in receiving education for economic reasons.” Both national and local governments have scholarship programs to assist families who wish to enroll their children in private schools as well as of national and public schools.

As previously stated, at the compulsory education level municipal boards of education designate the public school that each child attends. Generally, school attendance is

determined by the process of “zoning”. That is, students living in the same residential area usually go to the same public schools. For students with special needs, boards of education decide student admission to special support schools on the opinions of their parents as well as professional staffs.

Public upper secondary schools in Japan are selective, and each school selects students based on their credentials (records of studies, etc.) from lower secondary schools and the results of entrance examinations. Entrance examinations take various forms, and prefectural and municipal boards provide a major written examination on academic subjects (Ministry of Education 2000, 80-81). Therefore, the contents of the examinations differ place to place.

In contrast to public schools, national and private schools create their own criteria for student admission. Competition to pass entrance examinations for these schools can be stiff—especially in urban areas where high-ranked schools exist— and often begins as early as pre-school.

Decisions about staff

A fundamental principle with regard to the staffing of Japanese schools is that the agencies that operate schools have the power to appoint teachers. For example, in the case of private schools, each school corporation has the power to appoint teachers. Also, in the case of prefectural schools, each prefectural board of education has the power to appoint teachers.

However, there is an important exception to this principle. In the case of municipal compulsory education schools, the prefectural boards of education have appointive powers. Though municipal school teachers are public officials of each municipality, the expenses for their salaries are born by the prefectural governments, and one third of those salaries is subsidized by the national government. Under this financial system, the prefectural boards of education have the power to select and appoint teachers for municipal schools. Persons wishing to go into the profession of teaching at municipal schools must take examinations administered by prefectural superintendents. The examinations are quite competitive. Considering the opinions of both school principals and municipal boards of education, the prefectural board of education appoints and allocates teachers to each school. However, big cities are granted the power to select and appoint their teachers.

Accountability for school quality

While it is accurate to say that each school and its managing board of education (or school corporation in the case of private schools) is accountable for its own success, the national government has also played a very important role in guaranteeing the

quality of education for all students. By mandating standards not only for curricula and textbooks but also for school facilities, school organization, and teacher certification, the national government has been an important presence when it comes to accountability for school quality.

The competitive nature of Japan's school system has also contributed to the quality of Japanese education. The single-track school system introduced as a part of post-war educational reforms ostensibly provides all students with equal opportunity to advance through secondary school and proceed to university, according to ability. Of course, entrance examinations, especially at reputable upper secondary schools and universities, are very difficult, and the competition can be stiff. Such competitive entrance examinations have contributed to assure the quality of Japanese education, though they sometimes give too much pressures to students.

Recent reforms that promote decentralization represent a different approach to ensuring school quality and require not only a shift in power from the central to local governments, but also a change from a bureaucratic to a participatory mode of public administration (Omomo 2000). The establishment of Local School Councils (in 2004) is one example of this. Each council is formed at a school site designated by a board of education and consists of representatives of parents, local community members and others. Such councils have the power to approve school management plans set by a principal; they are also expected to have input on the appointment of school personnel.

As mentioned previously, some local boards of education have also begun to introduce systems of public school choice at the compulsory education level; others have measures to support the home studies of children who are absent from schools for long periods of time. In the Special Districts for Structural Reform, another innovation that has been introduced in the effort to decentralize and deregulate Japan's systems, even business corporations and not-for-profit organizations are allowed to establish and oversee schools. These schools are expected to meet the diverse educational needs of consumers and, as a result, to incur competition that will result in high quality educational offerings.

But the market and autonomous local actors cannot be unconditionally trusted to ensure the availability of a quality education for all of students. To this end, some degree of regulation for school quality remains necessary. Moreover, there has been in recent years a precipitous decline in the number of school-aged children in Japan: in 2007, the number of 18 year-olds was roughly 63% of the number of 18-year olds in 1992, and the number continues to decrease. This has weakened the competitive nature of the school system, which has historically contributed to maintaining the quality of Japanese education. Indeed, college entrance examinations in present day Japan are quite different from those administered in the past under a system colloquially referred to as "examination war" or "examination hell." In order to

prevent a decrease in the quality of Japanese education, the Ministry of Education has begun to adopt new policies; school evaluations and a national examination, both of which mark a shift in governmental regulation to one focused on outputs, as opposed to inputs, as measures of securing school quality.

Teaching of values

Moral education or the teaching of values has, since the World War II, been one of the most controversial issues in Japanese education. When moral education was reintroduced in 1958 as a formal part of curriculum for compulsory education, there were strong objections from those who feared that moral education would become a means of nationalistic indoctrination. However, it is not correct to conclude that the moral education classes have had a strong inclination for the indoctrinations of specific values. Instead, it has encouraged discussions on values or morality of general character. An American researcher described Japanese moral education in the following way:

...I expected the worst when I went to my first moral education class: dull Confucian texts sermonizing on the need for patriotism or greater filial piety. Much to my surprise, the class had no text. Rather, at the bell, one of the students turned on the television at the front of the classroom and for the next fifteen minutes we watched a short drama. Afterwards, the teacher and the students joined in a discussion to try to identify the moral lessons contained in the drama. From week to week the content varied, but never did I see programs concerned with political themes. Rather they emphasized fundamental matters such as the value of life, the foolishness of fighting, the importance of friendship, the problems of old people. (Cummings, 115-116)

Further, moral education has been sometimes neglected, especially at the lower secondary school level. A group of researchers from Tsukuba University pointed out that “it is not a rare case that moral education class is replaced by other subjects in lower secondary schools.” (Tsukuba, 207)

Even given this tendency, demands for teaching a love of country or a respect for the tradition and culture of Japan persist. Such phrases as “a love for the nation,” and “an understanding of, and affection for, Japanese culture and traditions” were introduced in the national curriculum standards (the Course of Study) (Okano & Tsuchiya, 216). Further, similar language was included in the Fundamental Law of Education at its 2006 revision.

Proponents of these revisions maintain that such values should be a common core of education for all Japanese people. However, opponents express fear that the national government will use moral education to curtail educational freedom and impose the specific values upon the people.

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